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Womanhood

Rev. J. H. Worcester Jr.

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WOMANHOOD.

FIVE SERMONS

TO

YOUNG WOMEN

PREACHED AT THE SIXTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO.

BY THE

REV. J. H. WORCESTER, JR.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,

1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

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TO MY MOTHER,

IN WHOM I FIRST LEARNED TO KNOW AND REVERE

TRUE WOMANHOOD,

AND BY WHOSE TRAINING AND INFLUENCE SO MANY TRUE WOMEN HAVE BEEN MADE,

THESE

WORDS TO YOUNG WOMEN

ARE

GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

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I.

IDEAL WOMANHOOD.

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."—GEN. ii. 18.

IT is an undertaking of some delicacy for a Christian minister to enter upon a course of sermons to young women such as that which I have proposed to myself, because of two things: First, because of the prevalence of a kind of false gallantry which demands that whenever men speak of women they should use the language of extravagant and fulsome adoration, on pain of being condemned as lacking in chivalry—although, in truth, this obtrusive gallantry is little to the credit of either sex, suggesting, as it infallibly does, an uneasy suspicion of injustice on the one side or inferiority on the other which this somewhat too violent protestation is needed to cover up; and secondly, because of an

extreme sensitiveness on the subject of woman's place and work, arising from the recent agitation of the question of "woman's rights," which has led many women to look upon men as their natural enemies and hereditary oppressors, and to listen to any utterance from masculine lips respecting their position and duties with a mingling of curiosity and distrust most unfavorable both to frankness of utterance and to candor of reception.

Nevertheless, God's word has a message to woman as well as to man, and he whose commission it is to "preach the word" may not justly suppress it. To seek by silence to avoid misconstruction or unfriendly judgment, or to court applause by bringing into the pulpit the polished, half-sincere compliment of the drawing-room, were alike unworthy of a minister of Jesus Christ.

This age has its peculiar dangers; city life, its peculiar temptations for young women. In the spirit of Christian earnestness, therefore—a spirit as far removed from sickly sentimentalism on the one hand as from arrogant controversialism on the other—I desire to speak to you of Christian Womanhood, its responsibilities and the preparation for meeting them, in the hope that I may be guid-

ed to say something which will help the young women whom I address to recognize more clearly and prepare more thoughtfully for the great work for their generation which they alone can do; to discern among the many flattering and beguiling voices which now, as of old, are proclaiming in their ear, "Ye shall be as gods," the voice of their true Leader, Pattern and Champion, and to follow him.

That there should be occasion on the very threshold to pause and ask ourselves, "What is the ideal womanhood?" is itself significant. It points to the unsettlement of thought in our day concerning woman's place in the world. If we raise this question, it is because society has raised it—because women themselves have raised it. There is a mighty revolt in our day, connected with the general upheaval of the older order of things, against the traditionary lot of woman—an effort to better her condition not simply by ameliorating certain hardships and correcting certain abuses, but by claiming for her an entirely new sphere and setting before her a new standard of womanhood. This revolt is largely led by avowed unbelievers, to whom the Scriptures speak with no final and

divine authority, and who do not hesitate to make even those relations which God has hallowed with the most solemn sanctions—marriage and parenthood—the subject of rash theorizing and bold experiment.

Into these fathomless bogs of unrestrained speculation God forbid that I should lead, or that the young women to whom I speak should follow. The one question for you is, What did God intend me to be and to do? What you shall become will depend not only upon the ideal you set before yourselves, but upon the agreement or disagreement of the ideal with the Creator's design. She who seeks to make herself what God meant her to be has the sure promise of success; she who seeks to make herself something else than God meant her to be is foredoomed to fail in reaching the goal, and to become dwarfed and deformed in the attempt.

Let me ask you, then, to seek in all prayerfulness an answer to this one question: What is God's ideal of womanhood? And that you may find it take in your hand this clue, which he offers you by his Spirit of inspiration: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him," or, as it is in the He-

brew, "over against him," "answering to him." I am not of those who would consign this old story to the limbo of nursery-tales. Whatever of mystery or allegory there may be interwoven here, whatever of deeper meaning underlies the pictorial dress, in these words speaks that eternal wisdom which was with the Lord "from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was;" and they contain the original, inalienable charter of woman's rights and woman's liberties, and of those two priceless legacies from Paradise—marriage and home.

Now see first of all in these words a plain intimation that woman was not made to be a duplicate of man, but his complement. She was made to supply his defects, to balance the one-sidedness of his nature, and with him to constitute a more complete harmony and to realize a more perfect order than would be possible for either alone.

Ideal womanhood, then, is not a pale copy of manhood with some of the stronger and coarser lines left out: it is something distinct and peculiar —a new thought of God whose very preciousness lies in its distinctness.

It is the fatal weakness of most of the "ad-

vanced" movements on behalf of woman that they are a struggle toward the complete assimilation of woman to man. Under the plea of equality they really aim at identification of the two sexes in pursuits, and therefore in characteristics and capacities. Though it is acknowledged that physically the sexes are separated by an impassable gulf, it seems to be taken for granted that all distinctive mental and spiritual characteristics are results of training which can speedily be made to disappear under the influence of new ideals and a new education. Such an assumption does violence to reason, which naturally looks for a correspondence between the outward and the inward and expects that unlike bodies will be found to enshrine unlike souls. It is dishonoring to the Creator; for if man and woman are spiritually alike, then one or the other has been imprisoned in a fleshy tabernacle unsuited to the spirit that inhabits it. The true relation of the sexes is, indeed, completely destroyed by this assimilation. It is in their unlikeness that their power over each other lies, and against every attempt to destroy or diminish that unlikeness the instinct of either sex will for ever interpose an insurmountable barrier, making every manly man

recoil from a masculine woman with a repulsion equaled only by that with which a true woman recoils from an effeminate man.

The only true woman's rights agitation is that which seeks to remove from her path whatever in the usages or institutions of society hinders her from seeking the highest development of her womanhood, not that which would clear a path for her to compete for the excellences and achievements of manhood.

In this entire distinctness of manhood and womanhood, if once we could clearly and joyfully recognize it, lies the end of controversy over the old question of the equality of the sexes. How will you measure against each other things so unlike? Which is superior depends on the quality taken for the criterion. Physically, if strength be the criterion, man is the superior; if grace and beauty, woman. Mentally, if comprehensiveness and logical power be the criterion, man is the superior; if alertness and flexibility, woman. Morally, man is the superior in truth and even-handed justice; woman, in mercy and in purity. The broadsword of Cœur de Lion or Saladin's scimitar —which is the better weapon? Mr. Ruskin sums

up the case well when he says, "We are foolish, and without excuse foolish, in speaking of the superiority of one sex to the other, as if they could be compared in similar things. Each is what the other is not; . . . each completes the other and is completed by the other; and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving of the other what the other only can give."

Have you ever considered what is implied in that other word in this same story of the creation: "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he *them*"? Not in man alone is the Creator's image to be found, but in humanity, with its two poles of manhood and womanhood. Each was made to reflect God's image, but from different angles. Like the two pictures of the stereoscope, they must blend together that the image of God in its full-rounded completeness may be seen.

But, following this clue still farther, we see, again, that woman's work is distinctly a work of helpfulness. The very idea expressed in her creation is that of companionship. She was made to take her place by the side of another and to share

his work. The individual life began with man; society and the home came into being with the creation of woman; and from that day to this the existence of either, in any true ideal sense, has depended on her. The home first, and then that arger sphere of intercourse and fellowship of which home is the germ and the model, is woman's creation, and therefore most truly her sphere.

"Ah yes!" you will say; "the old story again! Marriage first, last and always—the one hope, the one opportunity, the one destiny, of every daughter of Eve. Let her miss that, as scores and hundreds cannot choose but miss it, and her life is a failure." No, young women; I have said no such thing. The clue we are following leads to no such conclusion. I do say that marriage is God's holiest ordinance. I do say that the family is earth's best picture of heaven. I do say that wifehood and motherhood are the ideal state of woman, just as marriage and fatherhood are the ideal state of man. And this further thing is also true—that there is that in wifehood and motherhood to fill the hands upon which these responsibilities are laid, to constitute a vocation by themselves, and to shut the door upon an outside career, as the responsibilities

of the husband and father do not, and were not meant to, do. But it is not true that, because woman's work is helpfulness and her sphere pre-eminently the home, therefore marriage is her one goal and life without it a failure. Is there no place and work in the home for a sister, for a daughter, as well as for a wife and mother? And in that wider whole which we call society are there not sisterly as well as wifely duties waiting for her gentle and skillful hand? The need of womanly helpfulness in the world's work is great and manifold, and it is a need which woman only can supply. Married or single, as wife or mother, as sister or friend, hers is a share in that work distinct and peculiar—a share which man cannot take, and which, if she leave it to undertake man's work, must remain undone. It is hers to inspire, to purify, to elevate, to ameliorate, to comfort, to adorn.

A narrow sphere, say you? What great work of the world has ever prospered without her help? What did not the Reformation owe to the serene self-poise, the clear womanly insight, the cheerful, steadfast faith, of Catherine von Bora, by which Luther's fitful humors were controlled and his moody despondencies put to flight? What does

not American independence owe to the cheerful endurance, the heroic courage, the steadfast resolution, of the women of the Revolution? What have not missions owed to the inspiring influence of such women as Mary Lyon and the quiet, gentle, thoroughly womanly but fruitful work of such laborers as Fidelia Fiske? Think you the planting of Christianity would have gone on with the same marvelous swiftness and success without that presence and helpfulness of women which the Epistles so often recognize? Was Paul conscious of no debt to Phœbe, who had been a succorer of many, and of himself also? to Priscilla, who, besides her service in training the eloquent Apollos, had for Paul's sake laid down, as it were, her own neck? and to that Roman matron, the mother of Rufus, who had been to him as his own? Nay, did not the blessed Master himself, notwithstanding his lonely grandeur and his infinite sufficiency for the work he came to do, receive from those women who followed him and ministered to him, and from those sisters in the home at Bethany, a comfort and cheer which no disciple of the other sex—not even the beloved John—could have given? And what shall I say—or, rather, what shall I not say—of woman's

ministries at the bedside of the sick and dying, in the homes of wretchedness and want; of the charm of her presence in hospital and prison; of a Florence Nightingale hovering like an angel of mercy in the track of the demon of carnage; of an Elizabeth Fry entering like a messenger from Heaven the foul, the morally-polluted, atmosphere of English convict cells? What of woman's refining and purifying influence, by which the grosser passions of men are for ever shamed and restrained, and all that is gentlest and noblest in them called forth and strengthened?

A narrow sphere? Well, be it so, but it is one which you hold alone. In it you may wield a more than imperial power; and when you leave it to strive for other masteries and to grasp at other sceptres, you will leave it *empty*, and in its emptiness will be written the ruin of home, the desolation of society and the degradation of manhood.

Yet better even such a perverted ambition than that weak, degraded, wretched conception of womanhood which, alas! is shaping the thought and life of too many young women to-day—the conception which makes womanhood to consist, not in helpfulness, but in *helplessness*. Alas for the young

woman who has no truer idea of her Maker's design than to suppose that he made her to be borne through life like a helpless babe in the supporting arms of others, whose only reward shall be dimpled smiles and pretty coaxing ways! When God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him," he did not mean, "I will make him a doll to play with." And yet—charge it not upon men; say not that this is what they seek: in Mohammedan harems it may be, but not in this republic of Christian homes—and yet this is all that many a woman is. It is all that some of the young women of to-day will ever become, unless they rouse themselves to higher purpose, more serious endeavor and more thorough self-discipline.

The Chinese lady glories in her small feet as a badge of helplessness—as a proof, in other words, of her exemption from the necessity of labor. And there is even here an ideal of fine-ladyhood which glories in *hands* that tell the same story. How different from both these is the picture of the true woman drawn by the pen of inspiration! "She worketh willingly with her hands;" "She girdeth her loins with strength and strengtheneth her arms."

The very question with which that exquisite portrait is introduced, "Who can find a *capable* woman?"—for so the lexicographers bid us read it—suggests an ideal of womanhood as far removed as possible from helpless dependence.

Not to be a drag, but a spur; not to be a burden, but an ally; not to be a mere guest in this world, to be waited on and admired, but to be a brave, true worker in this mass of toiling, struggling, suffering souls,—that, young woman, is God's call to you.

Nor yet is the helpfulness for which God made woman the helpfulness of a mere drudge, to go and come at man's bidding, to cook his food, to nurse his children, to spend life like the Hindoo woman in the performance of menial offices behind a screen, while society, in its proper sense, is left to man alone. This may be helpfulness, but it is not companionship. It is helpfulness of a meagre, narrow sort—a helpfulness which may soothe, which may solace, but which cannot elevate, cannot inspire. God meant woman for a higher, broader work than that, and the ideal woman is one who, not despising practical efficiency and simple homely ministries, knows how at the same time to make herself felt, wherever she moves, as friend, as counselor, as in-

spiring soul. How different a being is this from the strange compound of whims and prejudices, of artful wiles and affected graces, of useless hands and empty head, of inane speech and frivolous behavior, of worldliness and vanity, known in some circles as the society woman! Alas for the *man* to whom the word "woman" stands only for this! But rich the man above the possessor of the Kohinoor who in his inmost heart cherishes the image of a true woman—wise in counsel, sagacious in insight, prudent in administration, gentle in rebuke, discreet in praise, wonderful in comfort, untiring in industry, unwearied in patience, undaunted in courage, unfailing in love.

And what is the power by which you are to fulfill this mission of helpfulness, and are to hold without a rival the sphere which God has given you as your own? It is the power of those distinctively womanly traits which till the advent of Christianity were always despised—or, at least, under-rated—but which in the gospel have been exalted to the very first rank among moral forces: to wit, the power of gentleness, of kindness, of endurance, of self-sacrifice. In these is the invin-

cible might of womanhood. It is hers to win less by argument than by persuasion; to subdue, not by severity, but by kindness; to reign, not by force, but by love. And by as much as the gospel of Christ has revealed that these are the forces by which the world is to be won, by so much has it exalted woman to a dignity and crowned her with a glory which were never hers before.

The ideal woman is gentle as the dove, modest as the lily of the valley, yet there is no weakness in that gentleness, no cowardice in that modesty. The ideal woman is as far removed from flabbiness of character as she is from helpless inefficiency. It was no "reed shaken with the wind" which the poet painted when, his eye resting fondly on the wife in whom his heart safely trusted, he drew this exquisite portrait of a true woman:

> "A being breathing thoughtful breath;
> A traveler between life and death—
> The reason firm, the temperate will,
> Endurance, forethought, strength and skill;
> A perfect woman, nobly planned
> To warn, to comfort and command,
> And yet a spirit still, and bright
> With something of an angel-light."

Peter breathed, indeed, the very essence of Chris-

tian courtesy when he bade men give "honor unto the woman as unto the weaker vessel," but it was physical, not moral, weakness of which he spoke. Yes, weak she may be of arm to wield the sword, but not weak of spirit to bear the cross. In patient endurance the restless spirit of man is weakness itself by the side of her steadfast, uncomplaining strength. "There are more heroines than heroes in the world" it has been said; and if silently to suffer be a truer heroism than grandly to die, who shall gainsay the sentiment?

"Warriors and statesmen have their meed of praise,
And what they do or suffer men record,
But the long sacrifice of woman's days
Passes without a thought, without a word.
* * * * * *
But it may be more lofty courage dwells
In one meek heart which bears an adverse fate
Than his whose ardent soul indignant swells,
Warmed by the fight or cheered through high debate.
The soldier dies surrounded: could he *live*
Alone to suffer and alone to strive?"

Great was the heroism of many a Christian youth who in the days of Roman persecution walked cheerfully to the arena to give his body to the wild beasts for food, but greater still was

the heroism of such mothers as the mother of Symphorion, who, when her son was led forth to martyrdom, followed by the eurious rabble, took her stand upon the walls that she might see him pass, and at the risk of being herself arrested and put to death as a Christian cried out as he went by, "My son, my son Symphorion! remember the living God, and be of good cheer. Raise thy heart to heaven and think of Him who reigneth there. Fear not death which leads to certain life." We speak of the sacrifices on the battle-field by which our country was saved from dismemberment and purged from its stain of slavery, but there were other sacrifices harder than these without which that rescue and redemption could not have been achieved—the sacrifices of the wives who watched with sad eyes day after day for a form that never returned, of the gray-haired mothers the staff of whose right hand was broken in twain and who sat in their old age by a desolate hearth.

Do you ask, young women, whether the ideal woman must, then, be a heroine? I answer, The ideal woman has that in her out of which the heroine is made by the occasion. That power of endurance, that steadfastness of devotion, that

capacity of self-surrender, which when the demand comes reveal themselves in heroic lives are latent in all true womanhood.

It remains only to answer this question: Where will you find the pattern of such womanhood as this? The Romanist will point you to the virgin mother. Yet almost as if in anticipation of this, and to guard against it, the virgin mother is kept strangely in the background of the gospel story. The outline of her character is too faint and fragmentary, if nothing else, to furnish woman that ideal standard which she needs. I point you rather to that one unapproachable ideal of all human excellence which was realized in Jesus Christ—the pattern of true womanhood, as he is of true manhood. For, since he was a perfect manifestation of God, in whose image both man and woman were created, we find in him a perfect blending of manly and womanly excellence. Never, indeed, were there a manlier strength and aggressiveness, a greater power of leadership, a more vigorous scorn, a more inflexible sternness in rebuke, a more majestic assertion of authority, than in the Lion of the tribe of Judah, yet never were there a more delicate

purity, a tenderer compassion, a deeper love, a more unwearied patience, an ampler forgiveness, a more absolute self-sacrifice, in the heart of woman than in the Lamb of God that took away the sin of the world. Would you attain the ideal womanhood? Go sit with Mary of Bethany at his feet, and you shall learn it there. There only can you attain an ideal womanhood, for faith is the crowning grace of womanly character. Womanhood without piety is a cathedral without its dome. "Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

Moreover, if the pattern is in Christ, the power is in Christ also. In union with him is the secret of perfect womanhood, as of perfect manhood. Many a woman has found in the love of a strong man her first awakening from frivolity, her first effectual impulse toward a true and noble womanhood. But infinitely stronger in its uplifting, ennobling power is the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let that love take full possession of your heart, and under its inspiration you will grow in purity, in unselfishness, in strength and depth of character, till you come at last "to a perfect" woman—"to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

II.

PURPOSE.

"But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."—1 Tim. v. 6.

"MEASURED by this rule," exclaims Dr. Dix, "what a graveyard is society! How many, how heaped together, are its dead!" And truly, if a life of aimless self-indulgence, of frivolous pleasure-seeking, be, as it is here presented, a living death, then indeed there are animated corpses on every hand—in our streets, in our stores, at our firesides—while a ballroom is a veritable charnel-house in which the dead, by the magic of sweet sounds, are whirled hither and thither like withered leaves in an autumn wind.

Were we to visit the crypt of some old cathedral at midnight, and under the power of some weird spell, such as the superstition of former ages used to dream of, to behold its coffined dead rise from

their couches of stone to tread those aisles for one uncanny hour and make those gloomy vaults echo with their unearthly laughter, we should recoil with horror from the ghastly scene and rush, shuddering, back to the actual life of the warm fireside and the busy street. With much the same horror did the servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, who could see beneath the painted surface of things, and who knew through fellowship with Christ what true life is—what true manhood and true womanhood are—recoil from the ghastliness of the gay scenes of the city of Diana. With the same shuddering must the angels of God turn from many a scene of mirth and festivity, in our modern cities, to the true life of the heavenly home.

These living dead are not all of one sex. There is many a young man as completely given over to purposeless pleasure-seeking as any young woman, with this difference—that his pleasures in that case are apt to be coarser, less negatively harmless, than hers. But in the Epistle referred to the apostle was writing of young women. I am speaking at this time to young women. And therefore it is to the type of feminine character here drawn that I shall confine myself.

"She that liveth in pleasure." The character here described is not necessarily that of the shameless wanton. The pleasure here spoken of need not be in itself guilty pleasure: it may be perfectly innocent, perfectly harmless, in the right measure and at the right time. The thing here assumed is that it has become the atmosphere of existence—the aliment on which the soul attempts to live. The woman whom these words describe is a woman destitute of serious purpose—a being who lives to dress, to dance, to coquet, to idle away hours over the trashiest of sentimental fiction and other hours in the silliest of frivolous talk; a being with no ambition higher than to see and be seen, without a conception of life more real or more substantial than a soap-bubble.

Now, observe, it is not mirth, it is not buoyancy of spirits, that is here in question. There is not on earth a more airy, light-hearted, effervescent creature, a brighter "phantom of delight," than a young girl as God made her. God forbid that one ray of that brightness should be quenched, one bounding pulse of that light heart checked! There is sorrow enough in the world as it is, and it needs all the mirthfulness of young maidenhood to brighten it.

But light-heartedness is one thing, frivolity is another. The one is the elasticity of the willow which bends and rises in the gale, yet all the while keeps its root fast in the ground and shoots its branches higher and higher toward the sky; the other is the dance of the fallen leaf in the wind, whirled round and round, chased hither and thither, with no fast hold upon anything, no purpose to fulfill, falling at last upon the river to be borne out of sight. This blight of frivolity it is which is seizing upon thousands of bright young girls with their possibilities of noble womanhood, with their pure aspirations after a high, unselfish life, and turning their existence into the dreary mockery of a living death. Indeed, frivolity occupies much the same relative place among the temptations of young women that dissipation does among those of young men. I need appeal to no further proof of this than the characteristic drift of the conversation of either sex when left wholly to itself. With men the drift is toward coarseness and irreverence; with women, toward frivolity and personality.

The reason of this lies partly in woman's nature and partly in her surroundings. There is in her nature a fondness for trifling details, an interest in

small things, which qualities pre-eminently fit her for the work of beautifying and adorning, for the administration of the household and for the sacred responsibilities of motherhood. It is this vivid interest in details which makes women as a rule so much sprightlier and more entertaining as letter-writers than men. But just because of this capacity for interest in trifles there is danger that trifles may absorb the life. But the temptation to frivolity lies in part in the young woman's surroundings. As a rule, she is not dependent—at least, during her young maidenhood—upon her own exertions. No definite thought of a serious life-work is forced upon her as it is upon the young man. It is true she has her studies while at school; and if she have any intellectual tastes, these are a great safeguard against frivolity. Yet even these are looked upon as something to be soon put aside. They are not, like the professional studies of the lawyer or the medical student, something to remind her every day of a definite career before her for which they are the foundation. And when she has done with school, she finds herself with nothing to do. The young man while in college may throw himself into base-ball and boating as though these were the most moment-

ous things in life, but he comes out, and forthwith he finds himself with serious business on hand. An earth-worm he may become, toiling sordidly for the precious dust, but a butterfly he has small chance to be—unless, indeed, he be one of Fortune's unhappy favorites, born with a gold spoon in his mouth. Otherwise he is compelled to choose some kind of a goal, high or low, and work toward it. With the young woman it is otherwise. The close of school-days, which increases the pressure upon the young man toward seriousness of purpose, takes off the pressure from the young woman and leaves her to the alternative of aimless drifting or of choosing and holding before herself, by her own force of character, some serious purpose to which circumstances do not constrain her.

Nor is this all. She finds herself now face to face with the claims of *society*. This is fitting enough if properly understood. The brightening of social intercourse, the entertaining of strangers, the interchange of the offices of good-neighborhood, the bringing together of various households into a harmonious and friendly whole, is pre-eminently woman's work. But what is society as it presents itself to the young maiden when she is ready to

"come out"? It is an uninterrupted round of merrymakings and shows and vanities whose avowed aim is amusement pure and simple, and which bring neither health to the frame, culture to the mind, enlargement to the sympathies, nor peace to the heart. And on this rushing, eddying stream of pleasure-seeking the young *débutante* is launched as the serious business of life. These are her social duties! This is her woman's sphere! This is the reasonable service to which she, a child of God, is to dedicate the first fresh years of her womanhood! This intoxication, this delirium, which destroys the power of earnest thought and the taste for serious study, which makes any conversation beyond the lightest badinage an impossibility and any occupation more laborious than fancy-work or decorative art a drudgery—this is her preparation for the tremendous responsibilities of wifehood and motherhood!

For, after all, these are in the background. Why is it that the young girl has nothing to do but dance and laugh the hours away, while her brother, in shop or store or office, is developing a man's strength under a man's responsibilities? Is it not because she is waiting for her destiny? She seeks

no serious purpose, she attempts no useful work, because these years are a mere breathing-space, a mere holiday of uncertain length, between the routine of school and the burdens of married life. So it comes to pass that the outlook which should be the most sobering of all, the very thought of which should be enough to breathe a soul of womanhood into the most careless, thoughtless Undine that ever lived, itself becomes an unconscious pretext for a life of frivolity and pleasure-seeking. Then, if, after all this idle waiting, marriage does not come, life is a failure indeed.

Yet let it not be imagined that it is only within the charmed circle of what is called "society" that the woman who lives in pleasure is to be found. Of utter aimlessness, emptiness of head and shallowness of heart the boarding-house can furnish as striking examples as the *salon*. And there is many a poor man's home where the father toils early and late at the bench or the forge, and the mother at the washtub, that the daughters may trick themselves out in cheap finery and gad about to picnics and balls under the impression that to live in pleasure is to become ladies.

Nor, again, let it be imagined that it is only

among the openly irreligious that the spectacle of this living death is to be seen. Alas! in our day as in Paul's—yes, in our day more than in Paul's—there is many a dead soul wearing the garments and going through the motions of the new life. It is a terribly easy thing in these days for a young woman to join the church. I use the word "terribly" advisedly. I mean it is an alarmingly, dangerously easy thing—much easier for her than for a young man. A young girl's outward life furnishes fewer marked tests than a young man's of the sincerity of her faith. She takes more naturally to the outward forms of devotion. She has less opposition or ridicule to fear than a young man. Indeed, it is rather "the thing" for her to do. And so it comes to pass that many a young woman may be found in the church—nay, even active in church-work after her fashion (which, by the way, may be a good-enough fashion as far as it goes); that is, in entertainments, sociables, fancy-fairs, church decoration, especially if there are agreeable young men to help—withal a teacher in the Sunday-school—after her fashion again, which is the very simple one of opening the lesson-paper, reading off the questions just as they come, and then

leaning over to talk with the teacher of the next class about the dress she is having made or the party she was at last night,—I say the young woman may be found who is all this, and yet whose life is as devoid of any deep, earnest purpose as the life of the butterfly that flits above the meadow. She plays at Christian work just as, when in the mood, she plays at housework or at literary studies.

Such is the character with which an apostle here deals. What now is his judgment upon it? "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." Dead! It is a solemn word. Dead while she liveth! It is a strong picture. An animated corpse—moving, speaking, laughing, yet dead. Dead to God; dead to the real purpose of life; dead to all true womanhood.

Oh, you say, this is strong language. This will do to say of the young man who gives himself up to the lusts of the flesh. He is indeed dead while he lives. But mere frivolity, mere thoughtlessness and aimlessness—how can these be stigmatized as a living death? Yet, believe me, there is not so much difference as you think. The lust of the eyes and the pride of life are just as deadly to the

soul as is the lust of the flesh. A life of vain pleasure-seeking will undermine womanhood as fatally as dissipation saps manhood. Youthful buoyancy disguises for a time the emptiness of soul beneath, and gives, even to the most shallow pleasure-seeker, a sort of charm like that which infantile grace gives to some of the faults of childhood. But as that infantile grace soon wears off and leaves the faults visible in their undisguised repulsiveness, so the charm of youth soon vanishes and leaves the dreariest of spectacles—a woman mature in years, but childish in mind and character, without serious interests, without earnest occupation, whose one desperate endeavor is to prolong by arts only too transparent the semblance of that youth to which alone the pleasures for which she lives have any fitness. Can the Holy Spirit dwell in such a temple as that? Can the Lord Jesus have any fellowship with such a soul as that? No! She is not only dead to any experience of religion, but wellnigh dead to any *appeal* of religion. Her heart is the trodden path on which the good seed falls only to be instantly caught away by the fowls of the air. There is no face—I say it in all sadness—into which the preacher of the gospel looks

with less hope of awakening any response to his message than the face of a frivolous woman.

Dead, but not buried, and therefore a dead-weight upon all the living with whom she still has ties. Oh what a melancholy sight when she who was made to be a helpmeet, a prop, a stay, a strong tower for refuge to the tempted and the disheartened, becomes instead a mere clog and burden which they must carry! Yet such she is.

A dead-weight upon her father, while she is still his care. What a pitiful spectacle it is—a man toiling early and late in his counting-room, rarely taking a vacation, reducing himself to a mere machine for the coining of dollars, that his daughters may make an annual display of bewildering toilets and go through an annual round of senseless gayeties at some fashionable watering-place! As for companionship, as for helpfulness, as for intelligent sympathy in his plans and struggles, the man might as well look to the cat that purrs at his feet.

A dead-weight upon her husband, when she has one. There is no surer, heavier, more hopeless drag upon a manly courage and ambition than a weak, frivolous, self-indulgent wife whose one

concern in life is present pleasure. In great crises which demand nerve and resolution she unmans him as did that British naval officer's wife whose helpless terror in shipwreck so unnerved her husband and brought such disaster as to lead to a rule forbidding wives of naval officers to sail in the same ship with their husbands. Of such a woman Miss Yonge has well said that "when pain and anguish wring the brow" she is likely to be too much occupied with her own hysterics to be "a ministering angel." Still worse, however, than this failure at great crises is the daily drag of her aimlessness and selfishness upon his manhood. Such a wife may be amiable, affectionate, doting, indeed. So much the worse for her husband. If she were a termagant, he could harden himself against her; but when she coaxes and cries, and, like Samson's wife, lies sore upon him, treating every self-denial which he asks her to share as a proof of coldness, and every sacrifice for honor and for conscience' sake as a fraud against her rights and those of her children, what is he to do? What he will do in nine cases out of ten is what Lydgate did when he married Rosamond Vincy—give up all high ambition for study, for

research, for self-denying service of his fellow-men, stifle the voice of conscience when it demands sacrifice, and devote himself to the one sole concern of gaining, by hook or by crook, the wherewithal to keep sunshine at his fireside by the unlimited indulgence of a frivolous woman's fancies.

Oh, young women, better were it for you that a millstone were hanged about your necks and that you were drowned in the depth of the sea than that you yourselves should be the millstones to sink a fellow-mortal in this bottomless abyss of worldliness.

She is a dead-weight upon her children, "she that liveth in pleasure." Can you couple with this description the holy name of "mother"? She dismisses her children to the care of servants that her round of gayety may go on uninterrupted. Better were it for such children if they were motherless in name, as they are in fact; for then other hearts would yearn toward them and some true home open to take them in.

Such a woman is a dead-weight upon the church, to which her sundry effervescent activities are a very poor compensation for the blighting influence of her worldliness upon its spiritual life and the

terrible stumbling-block which her frivolity lays in the way of impenitent souls.

A gay young woman who had grown up a stranger to religious influences, and was devoted to the theatre, the dance, and other forms of amusement, went to visit in a Christian family connected with a certain church. Her attention was aroused by the new life around her, and she began to ask many earnest questions. In the church was quite a party of young people who had their own prayer-meeting and literary circle. To these she was introduced. She found their conversation just like that to which all her life she had been accustomed. They enlarged with zest upon the gayeties of the town; their talk was of actresses and of balls. Naturally a leader, this young lady soon took the initiative in their amusements. When she found that her companions at the Saturday play were Christian young women who helped to sustain the prayer-meeting and taught in the Sabbath-school, she could not understand how they could be interested in such dull work; but when they laughed constrainedly and with an apologetic remark or two turned eagerly to the discussion of the play or the party, all thought of their Christian profession as a serious or important thing,

and all interest in Christianity for herself, seemed to be dismissed from her mind, and she returned to her home as worldly, as indifferent, as she had come.

What is it, then, young woman, that you need to save you from this living death, this withering away of your true womanhood? Just this: *an earnest purpose*, an aim in life worthy of all that is deepest and strongest in a woman's nature—an aim which you can pursue with all a girl's fresh enthusiasm, and with which the maturer nature of the woman will still be fully satisfied.

If you would make any approach to an ideal womanhood, purpose is the first thing to be considered. No one ever yet *drifted* into true womanhood, or true manhood, either. Life is an earnest thing, and you will miss all its glory and all its reward if you take it as a jest. Is your life free from care? Is it chained down to no hard necessity of daily toil? This, so far from being a hindrance, should be a gain: you are free then to give it any bent you will. These years are absolutely in your hands to shape to any purpose of self-culture, of helpfulness in the home circle, of useful ministry abroad, to which

you choose to devote them. And what golden years you may make them! What a throng of wearied housewives and busy, care-taking mothers are looking back with regret to-day as they exclaim, "Oh, if I had only made more of my girlhood! If I had only turned it to account while it lasted, instead of frittering it away in vanities!" But you must shape these years for yourself, or they will run to waste. The very fact that you have no life-work thrust upon you doubles your responsibility to find one for yourself.

Look into your own heart and ask thoughtfully, What is worth living for? and, having found an answer, live for that. Let that purpose govern your distribution of your time, control your companionships, determine your reading, prescribe your employments and set a bound to your pleasures. There is no danger that such a purpose will dull your vivacity or take the zest out of your life. No life palls so swiftly as a life of mere pleasure-seeking. There is a vivacity like the sparkle of champagne—a moment's froth, and then flatness; and there is a vivacity like the flash of the diamond—the gleam of a well-trained mind and a strong, hopeful heart.

And what shall that purpose be? Any earnest, serious purpose will save you from frivolity, but not every purpose will lift you to the full height of an ideal womanhood. A purpose to become a thorough housekeeper or an accomplished scholar, a skillful artist or a well-trained musician—any one of these is better and worthier of your womanhood than a mere butterfly life. But oh, I beseech you, when you are choosing, choose the highest. Think of that woman of whom Jesus said, "One thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." There is no purpose which so harmonizes with all that is noblest in womanhood as the purpose of unselfish service to One who is worthy of the highest love. Here is a destiny which you have not to wait for: it is waiting for you. You have but to embrace it, and it will fill your heart with abundant peace; it will fill your hands with useful ministries; it will crowd your days with fruitful labor; it will make you worthy to be the centre of a home, the guardian of immortal souls, if God calls you to be; it will make your life full and complete, if he does not. And here, too, is a sphere large enough for the most abounding energy and the most restless

ambition. Say not, Our hands are tied; the doors of useful service are closed against us; we are doomed to aimlessness. In Christ's service there are open doors enough waiting for your entrance. Nothing to do? With so many poor to help, so many sick in hospitals longing for the sound of a woman's voice and the touch of a woman's hand, so many children to be gathered in from the street and led to the Saviour, so many heathen—at our own doors even—to be sought with the message of salvation? No! If you have a purpose as earnest and as consistent as Emily Faithfull's or Mary Lyon's or Sister Dora's, it will not want for a sphere. It will make its own sphere, and it will fill it full with the power of a Christlike service and with the light of a true womanhood.

Oh, you poor souls living in pleasure, and thus dead while you live, what can I say to you? How can I make you see what you are losing? How can I show you the crown you are throwing away? What can I say but repeat the old call, "Awake, ye that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light"? To live for Christ—that, and that alone, is truly to live. Learn what that means, bring your lives under the power of that

supreme purpose, and you shall be as those who have awakened from a trance. It will be a veritable resurrection. And in the realities of that deep, strong life your soul will find that which will for ever uplift and for ever satisfy it,

> "And so make life, death and that vast for ever
> One grand, sweet song."

III.

OCCUPATION.

"And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not."—1 TIM. v. 13.

THESE words—from the same chapter whence we drew the warning against a purposeless life—present a strong picture of the effects upon womanly character of a life without occupation. Without attempting to follow its outlines in detail, I desire to direct your attention to the subject which it suggests—*occupation* as related to the development of womanhood.

I have pointed out the necessity of an earnest purpose as a safeguard against the temptation to emptiness and frivolity arising from the want of fixed and absorbing employment. It was necessary to begin at that point. An earnest purpose is the first requisite to the attainment of true womanhood.

So long as a young woman has no higher view of life and no more serious aim than to amuse herself, it is wasted breath to warn her against waste of time or to urge the importance of useful occupation.

But, on the other hand, the earnest purpose itself, once found, is in danger of abandonment if it fail of wise direction into some line of useful, well-ordered activity. The two must go together—earnestness and industry, purpose and plan—else the beautiful enthusiasms of opening womanhood,

> "Standing with reluctant feet
> Where the brook and river meet,
> Womanhood and childhood sweet,"

will all evaporate and leave only the listlessness of baffled energy and the hard, peculiarly unwomanly cynicism which comes of conscious disloyalty to one's own ideals.

Full well I know that with many a young woman this is the exact dilemma to-day. The high ideal, the deep unselfish purpose, are there, but the hands seem tied; the conditions of life appear to forbid the execution of the purpose, and the earnest womanly soul has no way of escape from unwilling bondage to pettiness and frivolity. I should not deal fairly with you, therefore, did I

not pause to consider also this question of occupation, and try at least to give some hints which may help you to transmute your bright dreams of womanly helpfulness into substantial and beautiful realities.

But here I am confronted with the fact that this matter of occupation presents itself in very different forms to two classes of young women, both of which are found in every community. There are young women who from a very early period find themselves constrained by circumstances to become bread-winners either for themselves or for others. Such may regret—not unreasonably—the opportunities for self-culture possessed by those of their sisters who are relieved of the problem of self-support; but, on the other hand, they may congratulate themselves that they are spared the temptations of idleness and the perplexity, often most painful to an earnest, self-respecting young women, involved in the question, "What shall I do?" It is to these last—the young women to whom the resources of a happy home ensure a leisure which is theirs to fill up at will—that my theme especially addresses itself.

Yet that I may not seem to slight a class which I have had through life the most profound reason to honor, and that I may not miss the only opportunity which this course of sermons affords me to say what may be to some a needed word, let me pause here long enough to say two things to all young women to whom the word "occupation" stands for their means of support.

First, *do not be ashamed of your work*, whatever it be, and never allow yourselves to think of it as debarring you from the pursuit and achievement of the truest womanhood. An honorable independence is unspeakably more womanly than a dishonorable dependence. There is, indeed, in the ideal relation of the sexes an *honorable* dependence for woman, as there is not for man. It is in the plan of God that man should be the bread-winner, and that his toil should secure to woman freedom for work more spontaneous and spiritual. It is not dishonorable, therefore, for a woman to depend pecuniarily upon the father or husband, as it *is* dishonorable for a man—special cases of sickness or calamity apart—to depend upon the labors of wife or daughter. But this ideal is most imperfectly realized in society as it now is, and nothing

can be farther from that helpfulness which is the soul of true womanhood than to lie a limp and voluntary burden upon hands already too heavy laden to support the weight, or to accept at the hands of strangers the bread of genteelly-disguised charity. Withal, you are American women; and for that, if you have your own living to earn, you have peculiar reason to be thankful. Doubtless there is nowhere in the world a social order wholly free from snobbishness and the spirit of caste; yet there is no land under the sun, I well believe, where honest work carries less of a stigma, where men, and women too, are taken more nearly at their intrinsic value—where, in short, it is more nearly true that

"A man's a man for a' that"

—than in this republic of ours. I think over the women, happily not few, in whom I have learned to know and reverence true womanhood—ladies in the best sense of that much-abused word, recognized as such in any social circle that is worth the entering—and I find that the greater number of them have at some time in their lives earned their own bread.

Finally, you are Christian women, or you may

be. If you are not, the whole foundation of true womanhood is wanting. But to her who accepts it from Christ's hands there is no work, however humble, however wearisome, however distasteful, which may not be made tributary to the truest refinement, to the noblest womanhood, to the perfecting in you of His likeness whose chief joy it was to do the will of Him that sent him and to finish his work. George Herbert's lines are none the less worthy to be recalled here because quoted so often:

> "A servant, with this clause,
> Makes drudgery divine:
> Who sweeps a room as for thy laws
> Makes that and th' action fine."

Only—and this brings me to the second thing I had to say—

Do not slight your work because it has come to you by compulsion, and not of choice. There is a great outcry in some quarters against the disparity between men's wages and women's. I am not prepared to deny that there is a measure of justice in this outcry; in other words, that the disparity is in part the result of arbitrary discrimination. In part, again, the evil is occasioned by the overcrowding,

and consequent competition, of women in a few callings, for which there is no remedy so long as the prejudices of society, and especially of women themselves, shut them up to these callings as alone compatible with the coveted social standing. But it is the general testimony of employers—entitled to thoughtful consideration, therefore, even if it seem harsh—that this disparity in pay is largely due to difference in the grade of work. It is asserted that but few women can be found who show the same thoroughness, the same enthusiasm for their work, the same determination to reach the top, that are shown by the best class of male workers. With them their work is less of a passion and more of a makeshift. This is perfectly natural, in view of the possibility that it may be but a temporary expedient. It is not reasonable to expect the majority of women to enter a calling, of whatever sort, with the same entire surrender to it as a life-work which ought to be expected of men. Nevertheless, what is worth doing at all is worth doing well. Thoroughness in one thing is the best preparation for thoroughness in another thing. Whatever your calling, therefore, aim at the top-round of excellence in it. Whether or not wages depend upon

it, whether or not future ease and comfort depend upon it, your womanhood depends upon it.

Having said so much upon this head, let me address myself now to those young women whose exemption from compulsory occupation constitutes one of their principal dangers—the young women of leisure.

I read the other day from an English magazine a genuine and really moving presentation by "A Belgravian Young Lady" of the dilemma of a young woman of the higher classes when, with the elements of a noble womanhood in her, with high ideals and spiritual visions of self-sacrifice, she comes, the routine of the school-room over, to confront the question, What shall I do? At home an ample retinue of servants renders her services superfluous. In the parish school or in district visiting she finds the ground occupied by those much her superiors in experience and in skill. If she turns to books, she is deterred from any thorough and systematic study by the want of companionship and definiteness of object, and by the gentle raillery of the home circle at her blue-stocking proclivities, till at length she gives it up,

and under her mother's guidance drops into the common round of fashionable pleasures.

The picture, it is true, cannot be transferred without modification to the circumstances of the American girl. The greater freedom and naturalness of American life bring marked alleviations of these difficulties. Yet many a young woman in every city is environed, I doubt not, by quite similar perplexities. I was not unmindful of such perplexities in my warning in a former discourse against a life of frivolous pleasure-seeking. Let me try to enter into them with you and show you a way out of them.

First of all, then, let it be said that, perplexity or no perplexity, wholesome regular occupation of some sort is a necessity. You cannot afford to be idle. Physically you cannot afford it. Not while you are creatures of flesh and blood can you escape the law that activity means growth and health and that idleness means deterioration. In the mere matter of beauty idleness is a loss as truly as excessive drudgery. The erect, dignified carriage, the firm, elastic step, the well-rounded arm, are not to be won by days passed on the sofa or in the hammock with a novel in the hand; nor are

the maiden bloom, the clear, fresh complexion, the modest, thoughtful, yet animated glance, to be kept amid late hours, heated rooms and exciting pleasures. Idleness inevitably gives rise to a craving for excitement which may drive away the *ennui* which is its penalty. But excitement persistently followed is the source of all manner of nervous disorders, resulting at last in the production of the languid, nervous, hysterical creature into which the gay young woman so often degenerates. This craving for excitement is a prevalent characteristic of the young women of to-day, especially in our cities. So marked is it that, as a thoughtful woman whose life has been devoted to the training of young women recently observed to me, even church-work has little charm for many of those who engage in it unless done in a kind of theatrical way. The effect of idleness, too, is to turn the thoughts in a morbid degree upon one's own condition, to magnify trifling ailments into grave maladies, and eventually, by sheer force of the mind's influence upon the body, to convert the vigorous, energetic girl into an interesting invalid.

As an example, on the other hand, of the power of occupation to promote health and long life, I

could tell you of a woman of wealth and refinement, a real and grievous sufferer from wasting disease, whose life is believed to have been prolonged for years by her active interest in a charitable institution which she was largely instrumental in building up. I could take you to-day to a chamber in a distant city where you would find a worn and wasted sufferer, confined these many years within those walls by spinal disease, who is lifted above her sufferings, made cheerful and hopeful, and so in a sense even physically strong, by her co-operation with various enterprises of benevolence and philanthropy to which she is a constant inspiration.*

But idleness is still more hurtful morally. It is as true for young women as for any others that

> "Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do."

Some of its moral effects are suggested in the text. She who has no business of her own to attend to is likely to attend far too much to other people's. Constant excitement, withal, is as dangerous to the

* The lady here alluded to, Mrs. E. I. Lovett, entered into rest on the day that this sermon was preached—Sabbath, December 7, 1884.

character as it is to the nerves. Like the craving for stimulants, this is a craving which requires stronger and stronger forms of gratification, till finally it is not content with anything less than the perilous experiment of seeing how near one can come to a moral crater without being engulfed. This, I believe—this exciting sense of risk, rather than any real sympathy with evil—is the secret of much of the "fastness" of girls and of the fascination which they find in the society of young men of doubtful character. Sometimes they get safely away from the perilous edge, and sometimes not. The escapades, the elopements, the marriages on a day's acquaintance, which often turn out to be no marriages at all, that our too-faithful daily chronicles of vice and folly so often spread before us, in too many cases may be traced back for their first beginnings to simple idleness.

What, then, are you to do? Three main lines of occupation are ordinarily open, to each of which the young woman of leisure, if she is wise, will regularly devote some part of her time—the domestic, the intellectual and the religious.

A thorough knowledge of domestic economy is

important for every young woman. This is true whether or not she ever expects to have a home of her own. Mrs. Livermore, whom no one will suspect of a covert design to limit woman to the kitchen as her only sphere, says truly that there are very few women, whether married or not, who are not at some time in their lives in a situation in which such knowledge is very important. It is foolish to argue that this knowledge can be picked up when the need comes. In a measure it can, but housekeeping is an art to the perfection of which much time and much study are needful. And it cannot be thought creditable to any young woman who has had three or four years' leisure in her mother's house that her attainments in domestic economy should be limited to cake-making, dusting and the arrangement of bouquets. I know that mothers are often to blame for this. They are impatient of unskilled help; they can do their work themselves more easily and quickly than they can show their own daughters how to do it. Besides, they want them to enjoy their girlhood: cares enough will come by and by. Ah, mothers! it is no real kindness to your daughters to bring them up in idleness. Their girlhood will be much hap-

pier and more truly free for some useful daily work to do. Cares will come soon enough, it is true, but they will be much more lightly and cheerfully borne by hands well trained to meet them.

Yet neither would I have this the main thing. These are the golden years for intellectual growth. They may be succeeded by years so crowded with other cares as to leave no room for wide reading or thorough culture. Such culture is the sure antidote to frivolity. It is indispensable to a full equipment for the social responsibilities which are a part of woman's life. Conversation is an art in which every woman of refinement should desire to excel, but it is an art which depends upon a full mind. Talk is one thing; conversation is another. "No, sir," said blunt Dr. Johnson; "there was no conversation. There was plenty of talk, but no conversation." Whether that sarcasm shall be justly applicable to the social intercourse which you help to mould will depend, among other things, on whether you devote these years of your young womanhood to mental occupation in the shape of serious, systematic reading and study, or to mental idleness in the shape of the lightest of light or the most unwholesome of sensational

reading. Oh, it is melancholy to think of the intellectual waste—the waste of intellectual opportunity—that there is in many young women's lives!

The difficulty to be overcome, of course, is the want of guidance and companionship. It is only the most intellectually eager who can sit down all by themselves and mark out a severe course of reading and study and stick to it in spite of the thousand and one distractions that *will* come up, but this difficulty can be overcome by association. Why should it be practicable for married women, with all their family cares, to maintain literary circles, and impracticable for young women with their time under their own control? Nay, why should it be the easiest thing in the world for young people to maintain a dancing sociable or dramatic club, and often the hardest thing in the world, apparently, to maintain a circle for the study of history or of English literature? It might be desirable, and it ought not to be impossible, especially in a city, to find an older person of thorough culture to guide the studies of such a circle and save them from the perils of desultoriness and superficiality. Indeed, this is one of the com-

pensations of city life—that, while it brings to young women so many temptations to gayety and frivolity, it offers them, in its libraries, its lecture courses, its institutes of various sorts and its numbers of finished scholars in every department, opportunities of improvement for which the young woman of the village or remote country town often longs in vain.

But even if this mode of overcoming the difficulty be found impossible, it may now be met in another way by means of the various correspondence schools which have of late come into being to supply this very lack, and of which the Chautauqua courses are the most conspicuous example. I cannot speak too strongly of the good that this system is accomplishing, nor urge too strongly upon young women, *whether employed or unemployed*, that they avail themselves of its advantages, unless they have already found some better intellectual occupation.

Just here, before I pass to the third line of work named, let me add another suggestion—not new or original, but probably all the better for that.

It is a rule in the imperial family of Germany that every young man shall acquire a trade or

handicraft, going through a regular apprenticeship till he is able to do good, fair journey-work. This because royalty is a precarious dependence. Kingdoms are subject to vicissitudes, and it is deemed necessary to a manly independence that the heir-apparent or a prince of the blood should be conscious of ability to make his own way in the world in the event of unforeseen changes. It is an honorable and prudent custom, which simply reinforces with the weight of high example the old Jewish precedent which required every man to learn a trade. On the same principle exactly, it is the belief of some wise parents whom I know that every young woman should be trained to do some useful thing well enough to support herself by it if other means should fail. And this exigency often occurs in the ordering of Providence, and the helplessness of many a woman of refinement under such circumstances is something painful to contemplate. Such a woman too often finds either that she can do nothing useful, nothing for which a demand exists, or that what she does she does so imperfectly and superficially that it cannot command a market. Mr. Howells in one of his stories has depicted the struggles of his heroine,

an educated and accomplished woman suddenly left penniless. She sets bravely to work to turn her accomplishments to account for self-support. First, she tries decorating pottery, but her work is not finished enough to bring her the needed income; then she tries coloring photographs, then writing for magazines, then fine millinery—always with the same result. She can do many things after a fashion, but nothing *well enough* to be well paid for it, till at last she comes down to making cheap bonnets for servants; and by that coarser work she manages to eke out a precarious subsistence till the novelist, as the only graceful way of extricating her from so trying a situation, is compelled to marry her off. Now, this is a fable which is not all a fable. Search beneath the roofs of this city to-night and you will find many a heroine of this sort. Real heroines they are, too, many of them, in the courage and cheerfulness of their struggles. But suppose every young woman in comfortable circumstances, in her school-days or in the years that follow, were to set herself to master some one thing—no matter what: music or millinery, painting or dressmaking, stenography or Latin—so thoroughly that she could make her

services in that occupation valuable anywhere; how enviable the independence she would thus attain! How much more calmly could she then face threatened misfortune! How much higher the plane on which she would approach the question of marriage! It would cease to be a mercenary shift resorted to for support or to take a burden off the hands of parents, and would become what it ought to be—a union on equal terms, a free and glad surrender of the heart.

But there is other occupation still awaiting the young woman who with earnestness of purpose asks the question, What shall I do? Self-culture is well, but self-denial for others is better. Christ has a work for every young woman to do—a work in which all that is best and noblest in womanhood will be called forth and developed as it can be by nothing else. I do not forget that all which I have thus far pointed out, if done with the right purpose, may be to Christ an acceptable service. I failed altogether of my design in a previous discourse if I did not impress upon you the service of Christ as the only purpose worthy to be the controlling principle of your lives, and I have been altogether misunderstood thus far if you have supposed me to be

advocating the performance of domestic duties or the pursuit of intellectual culture under any other inspiration than that of love for him; yet, besides all this, there is for every follower of Christ a work of ministry, a work of seed-sowing, to do—a work peculiarly adapted to woman's hands, to which your leisure constitutes an especial call.

There may have been times, there may still be places, in which the earnest young woman longing for some practical way of serving her Master is doomed to seek it in vain, but that place is not amid the manifold religious and philanthropic enterprises, the hospital boards, the Christian associations, the woman's missionary societies, the Sabbath-schools and industrial schools, of a great city, with its teeming population and its untold spiritual and temporal destitution; that time is not the evening of the nineteenth century, among the characteristic marks of which is the new and wonderful development of woman's agency in the Church and in the spread of the gospel. Christ has work enough for you to do—work that is within your reach, work to which even your inexperience is no bar provided you will accept it on Christ's terms. Those terms are—first, that you do not ask for a

great work; secondly, that you do not ask for easy work; thirdly, that you do not ask for showy work.

For instance, there is your Sabbath-school class. "Oh," you say, "that is nothing—only an hour and a half once a week." Well, if that is all, I agree with you that it is nothing, or little better than nothing. But ought that to be all? How many hours a week do you think you could profitably spend in preparing to teach that lesson? How many days in the month do you think you could profitably spend in following up those scholars, acquainting yourself with their home-life, showing them that you feel a personal interest in them, visiting them in sickness or gathering them in your own bright, cheerful home for an hour's sewing or reading or cheerful play? Ah! if, instead of dreaming of the good you would do if you were a missionary like Miss Fiske, you will take that class as your mission field and work for the salvation of those six or seven immortal souls as Miss Fiske worked for the souls of the little Nestorian girls in her school at Ooroomiah, I do not think you will complain of empty hands. "Oh, but—" you exclaim. Ah, yes! *but!* *But* that is self-denying

work, you mean. So it is. Are you looking for work without self-denial? Then you must go to some one else than Christ for it. "But it is so much nicer to get up a bazaar and wear a pretty costume, and have ever so many compliments!" So it is "nicer," but is it better? If you are asked to get up a bazaar, do it—for Christ's sake, not for frolic's sake; in humility, not for vainglory. But do not think that the show and the glitter and the crowd are any necessary part of Christ's work. The best work, after all, the work that will tell most upon the world you live in, and at the same time do most for your womanhood, is quiet, every-day work, without display and without excitement, done simply, done steadily, in imitation of Him who went about doing good.

And here I cannot forbear one more earnest word to parents. I am persuaded that the most serious obstacle which many a young woman has to encounter in carrying out her plans of improvement and usefulness is the opposition, not of parental harshness, but of parental fondness. Do not, I implore you, fathers and mothers, in your anxiety that your daughters shall enjoy life, persuade them to throw away all the things in life

that are worth enjoying. It is a serious responsibility to take, to quench a young girl's enthusiasm. That is a kind of murder that will one day lie heavy on the soul. The enthusiasm may be misdirected, it may be unbalanced, but guidance is a thousand times better than repression. If your daughter's plans are visionary, help her to make better ones. If her way of working is impracticable, show her a better way. But do not, as you value her womanhood—do not, as you love her immortal soul—hedge up her way with criticisms and objections and prophecies of failure till, baffled and discouraged, she settles down to a life of decorous commonplaceness, of indolent indulgence or of fashionable folly.

Young women, I have been trying to point you, not to any line of rare or exceptional achievement, but to the work that lies all about you—work that you need, and work that needs you; not to a path on the heights, but to a path at your feet. Do not despise it because it is low. Do not draw back from it because it looks monotonous. For it is that path which, followed patiently step by step, will lead you to the heights—the heights of woman-

ly character and influence, the heights of reverent homage and grateful love, the heights of divine companionship and everlasting joy.

IV.

ADORNMENT.

"Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."—1 PET. iii. 3, 4.

THE love of personal adornment is an instinct of woman's nature as deep-seated, as universal, as characteristically feminine, as that other instinct of sympathy of which Mungo Park bore testimony that, though he sometimes found it wanting in man, he never appealed to it in vain in woman, savage or civilized, in any part of the globe whither he betook himself. And in its place, within its bounds, it is as wholesome. It is compounded of that instinct for the beautiful, the graceful, the fitting, which makes the hand of woman a magician's wand, brightening whatever it touches, and of that

desire to please which makes the charm of her companionship. It contributes in no small degree to the attracting power by which she maintains that influence over the hearts of men which, rightly wielded, is a sheet-anchor to their souls upon the stormy sea of life.

And yet, natural as it is, wholesome as it may be, it is appalling to think of what mischief it is capable, and with what destructive power, when loosed from its bounds and allowed to become, as in so many women it does become, the ruling passion of life, it rages and lays waste. Think a moment of the sacrifices that are made upon that altar. To this passion for dress and for ornament have been offered up personal beauty, health, modesty, social concord, domestic happiness, the vital interests of unborn children, the integrity of man and the chastity of woman. Yes, it is through this passion —suffer me to speak out plainly the terrible truth: it is through this passion oftener than through any other—that woman is lured from the ways of purity and made to turn her back for ever upon home and upon heaven. Faust's *casket of jewels*—who shall count the Marguerites that it has slain?

Do you wonder, then, that prophets and apostles

have lifted up their voices in warning against a passion so ruinous? Do you wonder that men of God in all ages have echoed these warnings and enlarged upon them, sometimes extravagantly, sometimes mistakenly, but never without urgent occasion in the spectacle of womanhood degraded and immortal souls ensnared in the meshes of vanity and extravagance? You smile, perhaps, at the Quaker bonnet and gown. Yet mistaken as they are in point of taste, and mistaken as they are in point of principle, to me they always suggest thoughts of reverence rather than of mirth—reverence for the earnestness of purpose, the determined and effective revolt against the chains of a soul-enslaving tyranny, out of which they were born.

And yet they are a mistake. The whole treatment of this question of personal adornment of which they are an embodiment is founded on a misunderstanding of the gospel, and aims at effecting the impossible. To reject a thing because it is beautiful, to wear a thing because it is without beauty, is an ascetic perversion of the gospel for which there is no warrant in either the words or the example of the Master. Again and again have priest and pastor, entrenching themselves behind

these very words of an apostle, launched their anathemas against gold and jewels, against silks and laces, against even the bright ribbon or the well-dressed coil of hair. Again and again have they built up upon these words as a foundation a minute and detailed code of instructions as to dress-making, millinery and coiffure to recoil in ridicule upon the authors of them. Again and again have earnest women, in the ardor of conversion, sick of their lifelong bondage of vanity, snatched the gold from their throats and the feathers from their bonnets, only to react too often to greater extremes of extravagance and display. For all these have been attempts to crush down, to trample upon and to tear out by the roots a God-given instinct; and no God-given instinct will consent to be so treated. As well try to annihilate one of Nature's forces. The only thing to be done, with the one as with the other, is to direct it and to keep it within bounds by the counteracting power of other forces.

That is precisely what Peter aims to do in these noble and beautiful words. To take his counsel as a *prohibition* of outward adorning, though it has often been done, is as absurd as to take God's word by Hosea, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice,"

as a prohibition of the very offerings which he had commanded through Moses. The negative in either case is comparative in its force. Mercy, and not sacrifice—the inward, not the outward—is the essential thing in God's service. The hidden man of the heart, not gold and braided hair and rich apparel, is the essential adornment of womanhood. It is not merely that the words admit this interpretation: they compel it; for if they indeed forbid a woman to wear any gold or to braid her hair, they also forbid her to put on any apparel.

In these words, now, we have a complete code of principles for the regulation of personal adornment. Of principles, mark you, not rules: the gospel does not deal in rules. The only thing here that looks like a rule—the prohibition of gold and of braids—we have just seen, is not a rule at all. So, if you are expecting in this discourse to have an inventory of what you should or should not wear or a critique upon the fashions of the day, you will be disappointed in your expectation. I want to go far deeper: I want to show you, if possible, the true attitude of a Christian woman toward this whole question of personal adornment. This I will try to do by putting before you four inferences

from the truth here so exquisitely expressed, that the true beauty of womanhood is spiritual, consisting not in elegant attire or costly ornament, but in "the hidden man of the heart."

And here let me pause a moment to call your attention to the peculiar significance of this phrase, "the hidden man of the heart." You will notice that it describes, not the person adorned, but the adornment. It is, then, not something natural, but something acquired, something with which the soul is to clothe itself. In short, the figure is exactly the same which Paul employs when he exhorts to "put off the old man and put on the new man." The hidden man of the heart is the new man born of the Spirit. In other words, it is a Christian character, not any mere natural sweetness and loveliness, which is woman's true adornment.

1. The first inference from this is that outward adornment is not a thing to set the heart upon. "One thing is needful"—a soul adorned with Christ's likeness. Set your heart upon that. Outward adornment at best is incidental. It is no part of yourselves. No amount of ornament can make an unlovely woman lovely, nor can any plainness

of garb conceal the loveliness of a beautiful soul. You cannot afford to set your heart on anything but the essential. Withal, it is transitory and uncertain. You cannot afford to set your heart upon anything of which fortune may, and time must, despoil you. Only the incorruptible is worth living for.

It seems quite obvious to say that beauty of character should be a woman's chief care, and yet there are no lessons which men and women alike are so slow to learn practically as just these two—that to be is more than to seem, and that the soul is of more account than the body. We are all the time struggling to make a good show in the eyes of men, who look only at the outside, and are careless how we appear in the sight of God, who trieth the hearts. We are concerned about reputation and indifferent to character, heedless of realities and studious of appearances. So, again, we devote toil and study to the nourishing and adorning of the body, while the soul is left naked and starving. Surely it would be well within bounds to say of multitudes of women that they give ten thoughts to the clothing of their persons to one that they give to the clothing of their souls. So long as this

is true, so long as a woman cares more how she looks than what she is, so long lack of opportunity is the only thing that will restrain her from ostentation and excess and all manner of sins in the adorning of her person. The only safeguard against the temptation which lurks in the passion for adornment, and the long train of evils, already glanced at, to which it leads, is to learn to estimate it at its true worth. But, since all worth is comparative, that can be done only by putting and keeping it by the side of an object infinitely higher. Till that is done even Quaker drab affords, in choice of material and shade and niceties of plait and fold, a field in which the pride and ostentation of a worldly heart can find scope enough. Oh, could I bring before you in its perfect loveliness, and could your eyes once be opened to behold in its true radiance, the matchless vision of a beautiful soul, how would it cheapen for you the diamonds and laces which are your pride if you have them, your envy if you have them not!

Do you ask, then, How shall I know whether or not my heart is set on outward adorning? Put to yourself such questions as these; put them honestly, and face the answers fairly and courageously:

To which do I give most heed, the adorning of my person or the perfecting of my character? Which is first in my thought in the morning and last at night? Which gives me the keener sense of humiliation—to be outshone in elegance of wardrobe or to be surpassed in meekness, gentleness, unselfishness? Which causes the livelier chagrin—to be betrayed into a falsehood or a fit of passion, or to be seen in an old-fashioned bonnet or an ill-fitting dress? And be assured, if the answer to these questions shows you that *your adorning*, the adorning on which you have set your heart, is the outward rather than the inward, you are fundamentally wrong, and you never can begin to be right till this is reversed.

Begin to be right, I say. It might, indeed, seem that when you have reversed these two and set them in their true relation you would make no mistake. And so it would be if we were always logical, always ready to see the true bearings of all that we do. But the reverse is the case. We act on a strange mingling of Christian and worldly motives; we make strange compromises; we let the world, which has no sympathy with our motives or aims, do our thinking for us in matters of detail in the

most curious way. Let me, therefore, follow up this first inference with others which will make the line of right conduct still plainer.

2. Observe, then, in the second place, that outward adornment can never be made to take the place of graces of character or to conceal their lack. Do not think that if you are frivolous or selfish or vain or insincere you can offset these things by any outward charms, whether of face or of attire. In the first place, if you attempt it, you attempt a fraud of the worst kind. The bridge-builder who disguises rotten timber with a coat of paint, to give way under a precious freight of human lives, is not more guilty than the woman who seeks to win by arts of dress and manner a popularity and an influence which belong only to real worth, and which, so far as she gains them, she can use only for evil. You have no right to try to gain ascendency in that way. Least of all have you a right to try to win in that way the heart of a man. If you try it and succeed, you have repeated the treachery of Delilah.

But, still further, you attempt a fraud which will certainly be found out. With the shallow and unthinking these arts may be partially successful;

with the thoughtful and discerning they are sure to fail. The devices of the toilet may disguise a bad complexion, but all the arts of a Jezebel cannot remove from her countenance the traces of pride and malignity or paint there the sweet motherliness of a Hannah or the tender reverence of a Mary. Nay, more, to one who looks beneath the outward show, the very contrast between the adorning without and the deformity within makes the latter the more repulsive. "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman who is without discretion." It is not an attractive metaphor, but it is a strong one. It is worth your while to pause upon it long enough to bring the picture vividly before your mind's eye, for it is God's picture of what he sees when he looks upon a woman fair of face and tasteful of attire, but with mind unfurnished and heart untrained; and not only he, but all who are in deep sympathy with him. To such the beautiful raiment is itself defiled by the inward deformity, as the ring of gold imparts no beauty to the swinish body, but loses its own beauty against such a setting.

3. But I hasten on to a third inference—this, namely: that, since beauty of character is the one essential thing, outward adornment must never be

sought at the expense, either directly or indirectly, of that inner beauty.

Here we find the true regulating principle of dress. If the ornament you put on is put on in a spirit of ostentation to display your wealth or in a spirit of vainglory to eclipse others, if the coveted elegance of attire is to be procured only at the cost of a husband's or a father's excessive toil or by incurring the dishonor of unpaid debts or by hardening your heart against your suffering fellow-men —and, alas! of how much of the beautiful adornment that dazzles us in any brilliant company does this tell the tale!—then you have bought your momentary gleam of beauty at far too dear a price. You *cannot afford* to purchase an hour's bravery at the cost of one trait of ingenuous and noble womanhood. The sequel to the adornment so purchased is told by the apostle James in the following words of scorching severity: "Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." The adornment so purchased is not only perishable, but in perishing it will leave a sting and a loss behind it, and will witness

against the soul that has been marred and stained to procure it.

And here comes up the whole question of *fashion*. Shall you follow it? It is an easy thing to inveigh against fashion as though it were always and wholly of the devil, but that is just a way of dodging a really intricate question. What is fashion? Simply what other people do. Now, it is sometimes a good thing to do what other people do, and sometimes it is not. There is no virtue in mere singularity. In a general way, we may say singularity is a thing to be shunned. It is not worth while to make one's self conspicuous without good cause. But sometimes conspicuousness is unavoidable. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." Lot could not afford to follow the fashions in Sodom, nor Daniel and his three friends in Babylon. The truth is it is not fashion, but the *tyranny* of fashion, which is evil. It is well to take counsel of fashion, but it should be always with a reserved right to obey or to disobey her dictates according as they may or may not be followed without cost to your womanhood. The woman who has tacitly put herself under bonds blindly to obey the behests of fashion, even in matters of dress, has sold her soul.

One has but to consider who the leaders of fashion are, and what are their motives and views of life, to see how impossible it must be for a true child of God blindly to follow them.

Sometimes fashion will demand of you a pecuniary outlay which will close your ears to the appeal of Christ's Church and your eyes to the outstretched hand of his poor. Heed not the demand. Indeed, the very changes of fashion are so incessant that to keep pace with them is possible only to the amplest fortune, and scarcely pardonable even to that.

Sometimes fashion will demand of you a style of adornment which will imperil health. Resist the demand uncompromisingly. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own?"

Sometimes it will demand that which will compromise modesty. Defend that brightest jewel of your womanhood at any cost. Much as I honor Queen Victoria as a true and noble woman, I confess that in one thing I hold in higher honor Miss Antoinette Sterling, who, when invited to sing before the queen, on learning that it was imperative that she appear in a costume from which her modesty re-

coiled, chose rather to decline the proffered honor. I know "to the pure all things are pure," but how if that which is without a thought of impurity in the wearer bring a suggestion of impure thought to some beholder?

Sometimes fashion will demand of you an outlay of time in arranging and adorning which will leave little to spare for the adorning of the soul. Consent not to the robbery. "The time is short. It remaineth that they . . . that use this world [be] as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." Life is too earnest and its hours are too few to be given up to such things as dressing the hair and polishing the nails.

There is neither common sense nor piety in refusing to wear a thing just because it is pretty or because it is fashionable; there are both common sense and piety in refusing to wear it because it is too costly in money or in time, because it is indelicate or because it is injurious to health or to character. And if this refusal to barter away the incorruptible garments of the soul for that which must soon be food for the moth impart to your attire a certain stamp of singularity, accept it cheerfully—yea, proudly—as a proof that you are an alien in this

world and as a badge of your citizenship in a better country.

4. This brings me to one more—the last—inference from Peter's words. Not only should the outward adorning be without cost to beauty of character: it should in some real degree reflect and as it were express that beauty.

Do you say, How shall this be? Nay, rather, how shall it not be if the outward adorning be of your own choosing and ordering, and if the inner beauty be there? Do not the dress and the ornament express the woman? If she is vulgar, do they not show it? If she is refined, do they not proclaim it? And so, if she be inwardly clothed upon with that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price, will it not prompt her to choose for herself raiment which in its subdued dignity, its freedom from vain display and startling extremes, its appropriateness to her station and circumstances, shall so harmonize with that meekness and quietness as to convey the impression of them to all beholders?

And here, again, we touch upon a reason for holding very loosely by the behests of fashion. The tendency of a servile following of fashion is to de-

stroy all individuality in dress and adornment. This is a loss serious enough from an æsthetic point of view. Pity 'tis to see a company of women the charms of whose costumes should be as various and variously expressive as the flowers of a well-kept garden, turned by some freak of fashion into one great bed of sunflowers or asters or scarlet geraniums, but in a moral point of view the loss is more serious still. That your attire should express, not your own modesty and dignity, your own maidenly reserve and Christian humility, but the vulgar pride of some rich *parvenu* or titled adventuress, or the bold instincts of some king's mistress, from whom you have unwittingly borrowed it—think you there is no loss to your womanhood in that? The *becoming:* that is the one word which expresses what is to be sought after in adornment. But the highest ideal of the becoming is realized only when the adornment answers not simply to the face and figure, but to the character and graces of the soul within. See how these two, the outward and the inward clothing, blend and affect one another in the kindred exhortation of the apostle Paul on this same subject of adornment: "I will therefore . . . that women adorn themselves in modest apparel,

with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair or gold or pearls or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

These, then, are the principles of female adornment which may be drawn from this wise word of a wise teacher. Young women standing on the threshold of life to-day, with so much in the pomp and vanity of the world to dazzle your eyes and appeal with power to your woman's heart, if you will take these principles with you and faithfully apply them in all your adorning, you will not go astray; but, whether silks and jewels are at your command or you wear the garb of poverty, you will be well arrayed without and within.

And see by what great motives the apostle urges you to this manner of adornment. They are the two greatest thoughts that can ever take possession of your souls—eternity and God. "Whose adorning let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

"In that which is not corruptible." Is it not

melancholy so to squander in the cutting and fashioning of fabrics that will soon be rags, and in the bedecking with gold and gems of a body that will soon be dust, the time, the thought, the treasure, of a life that presently will be gone, that the imperishable beauty of a true womanhood shall be missed for ever? The old monks sometimes used to keep upon their tables a skull that they might ever be reminded of the end to which they must soon come. I would have you keep no such death's-head upon your toilet-table, yet I could wish that some time, as you stand before your mirror in your most beautiful array and your pulse bounds at the bright reflection, there might come up before you the vision of a skeleton laid away in its narrow house with all the bravery of life about it—the gold rings loosely encircling the bony fingers, the jeweled necklace losing itself in the cavern of the ribs, and braids of hair carefully twined about the skull—and that in all earnestness you might ask yourself this question: When I come to *that*, shall I still have a beauty which the grave cannot swallow up, and which shall shine and shine above the stars?

And the other thought is the thought of God. Woman adorns herself in part for her own eyes,

but chiefly for the eyes of others—for the eyes of her husband first of all, if she be a true wife; if she be a maiden, for the eyes of suitors and companions. I do not chide her: it is nature. The love of approbation we shall none of us ever outgrow. What is of moment is that it be rightly directed, and that we seek above all the approbation which is most worth having. What, then, if, while dressing to please others, you take with you this thought—that you will dress first of all to please God?

It is a pithy suggestion of Leighton's upon this passage, one which would need but the turn of a phrase or two to bring it close home to your experience: "Some who are court-bred will send for the masters of fashions. Though they live not in the court, and though the peasants think them strange dresses, yet they regard not that, but use them as finest and best. Care not what the world say: you are not to stay long with them. Desire to have both fashions and stuffs from court—from heaven."

But if you thus dress to please God, you will very soon come to see that the plaiting of the hair, the wearing of gold, the putting on of apparel, are

worth very little in his eyes even when they are most fitting, but that there is one ornament which is indeed beautiful and precious to him, the ornament of a spirit fashioned in the likeness of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. "Of great price" indeed is that ornament to him, for he paid a great price, even the precious blood of Christ, that you might win and wear it. And more and more you will come yourself to put the same relative value upon these. And just as your attire conforms itself more and more to the taste of one whom you greatly love and greatly desire to please, so, as you strive to adorn yourself for God's eye, you will grow insensibly into the fullness of a beauty on which that eye will rest for ever with joy and love.

V.

INFLUENCE.

"And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."—1 SAM. xxv. 32, 33.

I NEED not recall to you in detail the story from which these words are taken. While David, fleeing from the anger of Saul, was of necessity leading more or less the life of an outlaw and a freebooter in the hills of Southern Judæa, he asked supplies on one occasion from Nabal, a wealthy sheep-farmer, whose property he and his armed band had not only respected, but often guarded from loss. His request being churlishly and insultingly denied, David instantly, with the rashness of youth and the instincts of an outlaw as yet undisciplined by the responsibilities of

his later years, vowed a summary vengeance which should leave not a man of Nabal's household alive by the dawn of another morning. Hearing of his design, Abigail, Nabal's wife, with a loyalty to her husband the more commendable in that he was so little worthy of it, set out forthwith and met David, already on the march with his retainers to fulfill his threat. With a woman's gentleness and consummate tact, and, better still, with a woman's skill in appealing to David's better nature and arousing his slumbering conscience, she speedily calmed his passion, persuaded him to recall his rash vow, and, having thus brought him to himself, drew from him this warm acknowledgment of the timeliness and salutariness of the interference which had held him back from a deed of folly and saved him from the pangs of self-reproach for causeless shedding of blood. The words are a tribute to *woman's influence* which may fittingly introduce us to the consideration of this theme.

The theme leads us back naturally to the point from which we started in our study of ideal womanhood—namely, to the idea of helpfulness, and

particularly of helpfulness to man, as the divine end in the creation of woman. Though we then spoke of this divine intent as determining the true ideal of womanhood, we did not enter, save incidentally, into the question of the nature of that helpfulness. So much depends on a right understanding of this, so much is lost through the failure of women to appreciate the peculiar power which God has placed in their hands, and to use it for the strengthening and uplifting of man and the renovating of society, that I cannot conclude this course of sermons more fittingly than by an earnest word to you upon this theme.

The truth which I would bring home to you is, briefly, this: that the help—not, indeed, the only help, but the essential, the peculiar, help—which woman is to give to man is not in working with him, but in working through him. The relation of man to woman is not the relation of the right arm to the left: rather does it resemble the relation of the arm to the nerves that move and guide it. Despite all broadening of woman's sphere and opening new doors to woman's ambition, it will remain true, as it has been true hitherto, that the active work of the world, the pioneer work, the

constructive work, the work of exploring the continents, clearing the forests, building the railways, inventing the machinery, conducting the commerce, developing the arts, managing the campaigns, making the laws, will be chiefly done by men. I do not disparage the direct share of woman in man's work. That share is often most valuable. That man is certainly to be accounted happy whose work is of such a kind that his wife can work with him and contribute directly to his success. Nevertheless, even so, this is not her distinctive work. The highest work of woman is not that which she does at man's side, in the field, in the store, in the Church, even, nor yet that share of his burden which she takes in managing his house and rearing his children: it is that which she does by imparting to man himself an inspiration and a guidance in his labors without which he seldom or never attains his highest possibilities. Varied as her gifts may be, versatile as she may be in her adaptability to different sorts of work, valuable as her direct contributions undoubtedly are to the sum of human achievement, beautiful as may be the results of her efforts in many fields, the peculiar power of woman as woman—a power which she can

never abdicate, though she may fatally abuse it —is a power of influence.

To illustrate. It is recorded of Lady Hamilton, the wife of Sir William Hamilton, that she was of the greatest assistance to her husband in preparing his lectures, collecting and arranging material, and often sitting by his side all night to copy his almost illegible notes in a fair hand. But it is also said of her that she had the power of keeping her husband up to what he had to do and overcoming a certain learned indolence to which he was prone. The first of these was a great service, surely, but it was one which a hired clerk could have rendered. The second was a greater, and it was one which only a woman, and she a woman who loved him and whom he loved, could do.

Influence is something we all possess in varying degrees, and all of us in larger degree than we dream; but *woman's influence* is a thing by itself, a force in human life mighty, measureless, winning and losing battles, rearing and ruining empires, turning the tides of history and moulding the forms of civilization. An Esther pleads, and a doomed nation is delivered; a Catherine de' Medicis urges, and Protestantism in France receives its

death-blow; the women of Rome become dissolute and depraved, while the women of Germany retain their purity and dignity, and the pride of the Imperial City is humbled by the irresistible onset of the barbarians of the North.

Study the works of the great masters of poetry and fiction, and you will find it the rare exception that a woman's influence is not the controlling force upon which, for good or ill, the catastrophe turns. Ruskin thus sums up, for instance, the teaching of the great master, Shakespeare; "The catastrophe of every play is caused always by the folly or fault of a man; the redemption, if there be any, is by the wisdom and virtue of a woman, and, failing that, there is none;" "Among all the principal figures in Shakespeare's plays there is only one weak woman —Ophelia; and it is because she fails Hamlet at the critical moment, and is not, and cannot in her nature be, a guide to him when he needs her most, that all the bitter catastrophe follows. Finally, though there are three wicked women among the principal figures—Lady Macbeth, Regan and Goneril—they are felt at once to be frightful exceptions to the ordinary laws of life, fatal in their influence also in proportion to the power for good which they

have abandoned. Such in broad light is Shakespeare's testimony to the position and character of women in human life. He represents them as infallibly faithful and wise counselors, incorruptibly just and pure examples, strong always to sanctify even where they cannot save.

If, now, we inquire how this peculiar power of womanhood is exercised, we shall find the answer at least threefold:

First of all, it is the power of *example*. There is that in a pure and lofty womanhood which by its very presence inspires reverence, rebukes sin and attracts toward the goodness which it reveals. There is something in the power of a true woman strong in the elements of a really noble womanhood to subdue, to hold in check by her mere presence, coarse, brutal, even savage, men, which can be likened to nothing so much as to that innate majesty of Christ before which in the garden the rabble, which had come out with swords and staves to take him, reeled backward and fell to the ground. When the fierce Koordish robber Ghewergis confronted Miss Fiske and insolently demanded that she surrender his daughter's clothes, only to slink

away cowed and ashamed before her quiet rebuke, and later to return a convicted sinner crying to God for forgiveness of his wicked life, the power that broke his hard heart and brought him to the foot of the cross was the power of the Holy Spirit; but the instrument which the Spirit used, the thing which shamed him, and which cowed him as a company of soldiers armed to the teeth would never have cowed him, was the simple dignity of Miss Fiske's womanhood, before which he, a fierce bandit with no Western notions of gallantry, but only an Oriental's contempt for woman as he had known her, quailed as before an apparition from another world. With no other armor than their own womanhood women have entered into the midst of howling mobs—as did Miss Marsh, the English philanthropist, at the Sydenham riot—and have made them disperse in peace. We have ourselves in recent years seen this power put to the test with the most wonderful results in the women's temperance crusade.

Nor is it by men only that it is felt: this power of womanly character is quite as marked over the degraded and abandoned of woman's own sex. Through this alone Mrs. Fry wrought the wonderful transformation in the female wards of the English

prisons. There are women who can enter haunts of shame in which a man would be worse than powerless, and by the spell of their own purity and gentleness and tenderness can lay hold at times even of those most hopelessly abandoned of human creatures and draw them to seek again their own lost womanhood.

"This is my lady's praise:
Shame before her is shamed;
Hate cannot hate repeat.
She is so pure of ways
There is no sin is named
But falls before her feet,
Because she is so frankly free,
So tender and so good to see,
Because she is so sweet."

Herein lies the supreme power of a mother. More than in all the instruction she gives, more than in all the counsels she imparts, more than in all the authority she exercises, it is the power of purity, of truth, of goodness, of devotion, incarnate in her womanhood, which moulds the character of her sons and to every man who has had for a mother a true woman makes the name "mother" a spell from which he can never break away till

the last spark of manhood is extinguished and he sinks to the level of a fiend. It was this power, outweighing all the arguments of philosophy and all the evil influences of a sorely-tempted life, which caused Calhoun to say that the one thing that had prevented him from becoming a skeptic was the memory of the time when his mother used to make him kneel by her side and teach him to say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

In this, too, lies the greatest power of a wife. It is in what his wife is, far more than in all that she does, measureless as that may be, that the husband of a true woman rejoices. It is by the chastening, refining, transforming, uplifting influence of her own womanly character more than by all else that "she will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life." This was beautifully expressed by De Tocqueville in his tribute to his wife, whom he devotedly loved: "When I say or do a thing which seems to me to be perfectly right, I read immediately in Marie's countenance an expression of proud satisfaction which elevates me. And so, when my conscience reproaches me, her face instantly clouds over. Although I have great power over her mind, I see with pleasure that she awes me; and so long

as I love her as I do now I am sure I shall never allow myself to be drawn into anything that is wrong."

Do not think, however, young women, that it is only as wives and mothers that you will have this influence: it is yours now so far as you have the elements of character on which it is based; and if you have them not, you are like lighthouses whose lights are gone out—the cause of many a shipwreck that you ought to have hindered. There is in every man, old or young, an instinct of homage to true womanhood which causes him, wherever he meets it, to respond to its power. Do you know how largely the young men whom you meet socially are what you make them? If they content themselves with low moral standards, if they bear themselves toward you with easy and sometimes rude familiarity rather than with deferential respect, if they are absorbed in worldly plans and a vulgar pursuit of gain, if they fall an easy prey to temptations to dissipation,—you are largely responsible. There are few questions more worthy of your careful thought than the question *for what* young men seek your society. Are they simply fascinated by a pretty face, a girlish figure, a bright ribbon, the

music of a silvery laugh and the piquancy of coquettish arts—the old, old fascination of sex alone—or are they drawn by the spell of womanly modesty and dignity, of womanly depth and earnestness of purpose, of womanly beauty of soul?

But, again, woman's influence is exerted *in counsel* as well as in character. Let me recall once more a single phrase from Ruskin's comment upon Shakespeare, already quoted—that in every play "the redemption is by the *wisdom* and virtue of a woman."

Every man whom Heaven has blessed with that good gift, a discreet wife, knows the value—the all-but indispensability, indeed—of a woman's counsels. Men, it is true, are apt to claim wisdom as *their* gift, and, with justice, I think, so far as power of abstract reasoning is concerned; but in dealing with the daily problems of life, in adapting means to ends—above all, in dealing with persons—there is in woman a kind of practical sense, an insight into character, a fertility of resource, which make her invaluable to man as companion and friend. In man there is, I think, an instinctive recognition of this peculiar wisdom, and a disposition to lean upon woman as his counselor which is as

natural as to woman the disposition to lean upon man as her defender; and where the native woman's wit is strengthened by accurate knowledge and guided by lofty principle, it is a dependence of which he seldom has reason to repent.

Lastly, woman influences man through *sympathy*, animating him to strenuous effort, calling forth his latent power and energy, by her approbation and praise and supporting him under disappointment and defeat by her steadfast courage. There are probably very few men who are able to make the most of themselves, to bring out the best that is in them, without a woman's encouragement. The old chivalry but expressed a law of human nature when it assigned to woman's hand the crowning of the victors in the tournament. On the battle-fields of life as on the fields of knightly contest the combatants are animated and sustained by the consciousness of woman's gaze, the assurance of woman's sympathy, the hope of woman's approving smile. The world will never know how large a debt it owes for its best literature and its scientific lore to such sisters as Dorothy Wordsworth and Caroline Herschel. We have just received the testimony of Mr. Julian Hawthorne that his father never could

have done his work without the help thus derived from his wife's sympathy and encouragement. Even though she be an idealized and far-off vision like Dante's Beatrice, still the poet sings his song that he may lay his laurels at her feet.

In these ways, then—by example, by counsel and by sympathy—it is in your power to put forth a redeeming influence by which the men around you shall be saved from sin, an inspiring influence by which they shall be roused to their highest possibilities of achievement, an elevating influence by which society shall be lifted from its heartlessness and worldliness to the high plane of Christian sincerity and Christian love.

It is within your power, I say. If you fail so to use your power, what then? Then you will fail, not negatively, but positively—so fail as to drag down those whom you should have lifted up. For, mark it well, influence belongs to you simply as women. Though the direction of your influence depends upon character, the fact of influence is bound up with the mysterious power of sex itself. That power is something you cannot alter. By no will of yours can you change its laws. If you are

weak or worldly or wicked, still men will follow you, listen to you, lean upon you—follow you to death if you will not lead them to life, listen to you though you be their counselors to do wickedly, lean upon you till the broken reed has pierced their hand. It is a mournful thing that the first record we have in Scripture of woman's influence is a record of its perversion: "She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." No hint there of beguiling words such as the serpent had need of. Enough that *she gave.* Her husband took and did eat. And from that day to this, for good or for evil, man has followed woman's lead, and is following it still. As of old with the forbidden fruit, so to-day with the wine-cup: if your hand offers it, he will take it. Not always: here and there a Joseph may resist the temptress, a Job refuse at his wife's instance to curse God and die; but, though a woman become a Delilah, a Jezebel or a Herodias, she will not want for men who will put their strength, their kingdom, their conscience, into her keeping.

I have little fear that any of you will become such, but I do fear lest you should be content with

something less than true womanhood, I do fear lest you should become worldly or frivolous or self-indulgent or vain, and in so doing should mould the men about you to your own likeness and infuse into the society about you your own spirit. For, remember, as I have already reminded you, if you do this you will be weights to hold down and drag back those who fain would rise to better things. Here and there a man may be found—perhaps one in a hundred—who can stand up against the influence of a weak, characterless, self-indulgent or complaining wife, and become, in spite of her, the man God means him to be, but I believe it would be easier to find men who would go to the stake. When the husband of Vittoria Colonna was offered the crown of Naples as an inducement to join the league against his sovereign, Charles V., she bade him spurn the offer, and he did. Suppose she had counseled otherwise, suppose that, dazzled by the glitter of royalty, she had entreated and cajoled him to make her a queen, would he then have refused the bribe? He might, but he would then have been one man among a thousand. That is what is going on to-day in hundreds of homes in this very city. Women with their hearts set upon

show, upon glitter, upon dress, upon local distinction or watering-place notoriety, upon surpassing some rival, upon climbing a round or two more of the social ladder, upon more of the luxuries and splendors of wealth, are leading their husbands on, it may be unconsciously, to a treason just as base, if less open and conspicuous, inducing them to abandon their integrity, to prove false to their ideals, to betray the Lord Jesus Christ, for the sake of these paltry baubles.

And what the influence of a wife is upon her husband, that, in a less degree, is the influence of every woman upon society at large. The great curse of society to-day is its materialism, its pride of wealth, its devotion to luxury; and the power of that evil to maintain its hold lies in the influence of woman. Not till she ceases to worship the god of this world, to bow at the shrine of fashion, to court the rich, to patronize the poor and to struggle for position, and points the way to nobler standards and higher ideals, shaming by her unworldliness the sordidness of men and awaking their higher aspirations by her example, will this blight be removed and human society become a true though dim reflection of the intercourse of heaven.

Young women, are you doing anything to bring this brighter day? or are you by your own low aims and frivolous characters helping to rivet closer the slavish chains upon this Mammon-worshiping generation?

To ask this question is to ask whether you are winning and revealing a true womanhood. For—let me repeat it again—though you have influence simply as women, you can have a right, a saving, influence only as you are *true* women. Failing that, your example sets before men a false standard, your woman's wit degenerates to a low, selfish cunning, your sympathy is only with men's baser nature and your encouragement only for their lower aims. There is no inspiring, redeeming, uplifting power in mere feminine softness and amiability, none in the charms of beauty or adornment, none in gifts or culture, but only and always in high, strong, holy womanhood. Where that is, nothing can hide, nothing can bound, its influence. A young woman may be as plain, as unlettered, as unversed in the usages of polite society, as Jeanie Deans; but if she be as true and strong a woman, she will make her influence tell on all around her, reaching up to queens upon the throne to move and

soften, and down to fallen humanity in the prison-cell to rescue and reclaim.

And that womanhood is attained in Christ. If you would prove to the uttermost the power of woman's influence and bring to the world in its fullness the helpfulness for which God placed you in it, open your hearts to that divine Guest; let him abide there; let him clothe you with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; let him enrich you with the wisdom, pure, peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, which is from above; let him impart to you his strong courage and his deep and tender sympathy; and then take the place he gives you, assured that in no place can such a womanhood be thrown away, but that, wherever you may be—in cottage or in hall, in the centre of the happy domestic circle or in the lonely walks of solitary life, in the midst of the refined and courtly company, at the bedside of the sick, in the hovel of the poor, in the cell of the prisoner or in the house of God—men will be the better for your presence, the wiser for your counsel, and the stronger for your sympathy, the world the brighter for your passing through it; that your image will be cherished in many a heart with a reverence second only to that paid to

the Christ himself; and that the benediction upon her by whom the world's redemption came, "Blessed art thou among women," shall be yours from many a human tongue while you live, and yours at the last from His lips whose benediction shall be your heaven.

THE END.

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